

Remarks to the National Tripartite Seminar on the Link between
Labour Standards and Productivity and Competitiveness

BWU Labour College

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By Dennis De Peiza
General Secretary CTUSAB

Let me start by welcoming all participants to the Seminar on the all important subject on the Link between Labour Standards and Productivity and Competitiveness.

I extend a Special welcome to Dr. André Vincent Henry, Director of PROMALCO and Mr. Shane Kisson, Project Officer, PROMALCO, who join Dr. Henry as the facilitators for today's seminar.

It is an important step under the PROMALCO initiative that representatives drawn for the Social Partnership here in Barbados from the labour movement, the Private Sector and Government, could assemble here at the BWU Labour College to examine three fundamental aspects that are linked to the repositioning of our economy in a global changing environment. This seminar is significant in helping all players to create a better understanding of the challenge we face with the advent of globalisation, and to develop the type of relationship that is necessary in creating an environment, which would enable Barbados to maintain and be a viable player in the world market place.

The exercise which we undertake today, comes out of a change in the world economic order, that forces us to change the way business was formerly done, particularly in the trading, distributive, banking and other financial service sectors.

It is important to note that both regionalization and the globalisation of markets demand that the entire Caribbean is now being challenged to improve productivity, and to produce high quality goods and services if it is to remain competitive.

The bottom line is that this demands a change of approach and attitude on the part of both Management and Labour. It means that it is imperative that a highly trained; creative, disciplined and motivated work force must be developed if Barbados and the entire region is to compete meaningful in the global market place.

The development of Labour Codes which are labour centred and that are aimed at providing better conditions of work, and promoting better employment practices are desirable if trust is to be developed between employer and employee, towards building better workplace relationships, and a stimulating a highly motivated and productive labour force.

To re-emphasize the point, it is anticipated that where good workplace relationships exist; this would easily be translated in greater efficiency and productivity.

Accepting that increase output and efficiency serve to position businesses to be far more competitive, it stands to reason that the output of labour would be tied to the inputs that employers make to motivate their employees. Hence there becomes the need for employers to identify clear productivity standards.

From a Labour perspective today's seminar ought to impress upon Private Sector Employers, and Government (as an employer) that should they fail to work together towards putting systems in place that are aimed at developing Labour Management Communication and Cooperation, and promoting the interest of workers as an important partner, then this would prove disastrous in maintaining high levels of productivity, as well as being competitive.

Finally let me recognize the efforts of the Labour Department, and in particular the work of the local PROMALCO Task Force under the chairmanship of Mr. Vincent Burnette, for the work it is doing in sensitising and training members of the Social Partners in Barbados about the PROMALCO Initiative.

It is my hope that these efforts will be intensified towards reaching those in the top Management positions in the business community, if the inevitable change to how business is being done, is to become more apparent.